

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 137 246

SP 010 883

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TITLE An Experiential Model for Graduate Teacher Education in Reading.
NOTE 12p.
EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.83 HC-\$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Diagnostic Teaching; Elementary Secondary Education; *Field Experience Programs; *Graduate Study; Observation; *Program Descriptions; *Reading Instruction; Reading Programs; *Sequential Programs; *Teacher Education; Teaching Models; Team Teaching; Tutoring
IDENTIFIERS Ohio University; Teacher Corps

ABSTRACT

The authors present a brief description of an experiential, sequenced graduate program in reading instruction which answers traditional criticisms of field-based graduate study. Such criticisms include the belief that graduate teacher education is not in the domain of field-based instruction, that adequate supervision is difficult to provide, that goals are vague and poorly defined, and that activity sequences are poorly planned. The Ohio University Teacher Corps Project in Reading, constructed to avoid these shortcomings, consists of six experiential phases, which may be viewed as comparable to the quarters of a school year, or as sequential components not bound by time constraints but by the student's competencies. Phase One consists of observation, tutoring, and team teaching, designed to acquaint the graduate student with the experiences and processes necessary for effective instruction. In Phases Two and Three, the student functions as an instructional team member, first at the elementary level and then at the secondary level. As the student proceeds through these phases, he becomes less of an observer and more of a contributing member of the team. Phases Four and Five are devoted to developing diagnostic-prescriptive skills, again as a team member in elementary and secondary level situations. Phase Six provides the student with the opportunity to demonstrate the integration of all his previous skill attainment by assuming the role of instructional leader in reading. The variety of experiences provided in this program give the student the necessary expertise in reading necessary to effectively deal with students at all grade and achievement levels. (NB)

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AN EXPERIENTIAL MODEL
FOR GRADUATE TEACHER EDUCATION
IN READING

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Field-based instruction represents one of the true paradoxes which exists in teacher education. It currently is an integral part of many undergraduate teacher education programs, and many educators would attest to the merit of this concept.

Despite its commendations in conjunction with undergraduate teacher education, field-based instruction has not attained a corresponding degree of success and/or implementation at the graduate level. Few institutions of higher education have incorporated field-based instruction into their graduate programs, and in instances where they do exist, field-based instruction generally has shown little or no advantages over "traditional" training programs.

While numerous factors may be responsible for this paradox, there are at least four reasons why field-based education has not attained popularity or success in graduate teacher education endeavors. First, many educators do not feel that graduate teacher education is in the domain of field-based instruction. Second, adequate supervision, crucial to the success of field-based programs, is difficult to provide since the majority of graduate students teach in different school districts. Third, many times the goals of field-based programs are vague and poorly defined, thus making it difficult for students to attain them. Fourth, the sequencing of activities for students is poorly planned; i.e., the student is asked to perform tasks for which he is not adequately prepared,

or even worse, is asked to delay his achieving the desired outcomes of the program long after he is adequately prepared because the program is time-controlled, not competency-based.

Reexamination of Criticisms

While these criticisms of field-based instruction may be true, it is essential that we reexamine these in light of two developments in education: (1) an effort to upgrade teacher certification requirements by many state departments of education; and, (2) a feeling on the part of many teachers that they are not adequately prepared to meet the instructional needs of each of their students.

It is the belief of the authors that the granting of a bachelor's degree does not necessarily signal an end to a teacher's growth as a professional. The graduate student is still a teacher in development, one who should be presented with a continual variety of educational experiences from which he can learn and grow. It is assumptive to expect a new teacher to be a "classroom specialist" able to deal with the multiplicity of problems with which he may be presented.

Therefore, it is our contention that field-based experiences should be an integral part of graduate programs for students, wherein they are given the supervision necessary to adequately achieve the goals of the program. Additionally, it is essential that these field-based activities also be sequential in nature; i.e., a student must be given adequate preparation for a task before being asked to perform that task. It is this sequence of activities which gives the developing teacher the skills necessary to become a competent teacher and an instructional leader.

A Proposed Model

The Ohio University Teacher Corps Project in Reading has developed a series of sequential field-based experiences designed to improve the expertise of graduate students in reading. While it is our intent to present these experiences for consideration as a model for other institutions of higher education, this model of sequential teacher experiences should not be viewed as a panacea for all of education's ills. Rather, it is presented as a model from which those institutions, in philosophical agreement with the model, may examine the merits of its basic structure for possible incorporation into their graduate program in reading.

The Ohio University Teacher Corps Project in Reading has conceived the process of development of the graduate student in six experiential phases, as shown in Figure One. Prior to entry into each of these phases, the graduate student must demonstrate evidence of prerequisite skills necessary for competent performance in that phase. The phases may be conceived as being comparable to the academic quarters of a school year, or may be adapted to the particular time constraints of an institution. The phases may also be seen as sequential components which are not bound by time constraints; i.e., a student may pass from one phase to another as soon as he masters the competencies of each phase.

Phase One. The graduate student in reading is seen as: (1) an observer of instruction; (2) a tutor; and, (3) an instructional team member. As an observer, the graduate student examines diverse teaching styles and various learning styles of students in classrooms. As a tutor, the graduate student experiences the

interaction of working with a child and experiments with his newly gained knowledge derived from observation. As a part of a teaching team, both through observation and participation, the graduate student is a part of the collaborative decision-making process essential to the optimal functioning of an instructional team. Phase One is designed to acquaint graduate students with many of the experiences and processes necessary for successful participation in the instructional process.

Phases Two and Three. In these experiential phases, the graduate student functions as a contributing member of an instructional team in the collaborative decision-making process on both the elementary and secondary levels. During Phase Two, the graduate student works with students at the elementary school level. In Phase Three, secondary school students are the focus of the graduate student. Depending upon the number of graduate students in these phases of the experiential program, an institution may choose to place half of the number at the elementary level in Phase Two and the other half at the secondary level. In the third phase, the graduate students can exchange places to experience involvement with students on different grade levels as shown in Figure One. During these two phases, the graduate student continues to work with students in individual activities, and additionally, begins working with them in small group and whole class activities. As the graduate student proceeds through Phases Two and Three and gains expertise in reading, his role as a team member changes from that of primarily an observer to that of a contributing

participant able to draw from his experiences to aid in collaborative decisions concerning classroom activities.

Phases Four and Five. The graduate student implements his skills as a diagnostic-prescriptive teacher on the elementary and secondary levels. Expertise gained from his experiences in Phases One, Two, and Three now begins to be implemented. As in Phases Two and Three, Phases Four and Five are interchangeable; i.e., the graduate student works on the elementary level during one phase and on the secondary level during the subsequent phase. In these phases, the activities of the graduate student involved providing diagnostic-prescriptive instruction to his own assigned groups of students as well as to students of other teachers. The graduate student now functions as a resource person with expertise in determining skill needs and in prescribing instruction for students. During these phases of experiential activities, the graduate student assumes an even more active role in the teaching team situations, and is given the opportunity to display instructional leadership in classrooms.

Phase Six. This phase represents the culmination of the graduate student's experiential activities. It is in this phase that the graduate student is given the opportunity to demonstrate the integration of all his previous programmatic experiences. At this point in his development, the graduate student, during his five previous phases, has had the benefits of: (1) experiences in team building and instructional leadership; (2) all the necessary prerequisite skills designed to enable him to function

successfully in the classroom; and, (3) a variety of experiences as a classroom teacher and diagnostic-prescriptive instructor. On the basis of these experiences, the graduate student is ready to assume the role of an instructional leader in reading, the culminating experience in his training program. In Phase Six, the graduate student functions as an instructional leader who works with teachers of reading at the elementary and secondary levels by providing guidance in diagnostic-prescriptive instruction and in classroom management. As an instructional leader, the graduate student greatly influences the decisions made concerning the instruction of students in reading.

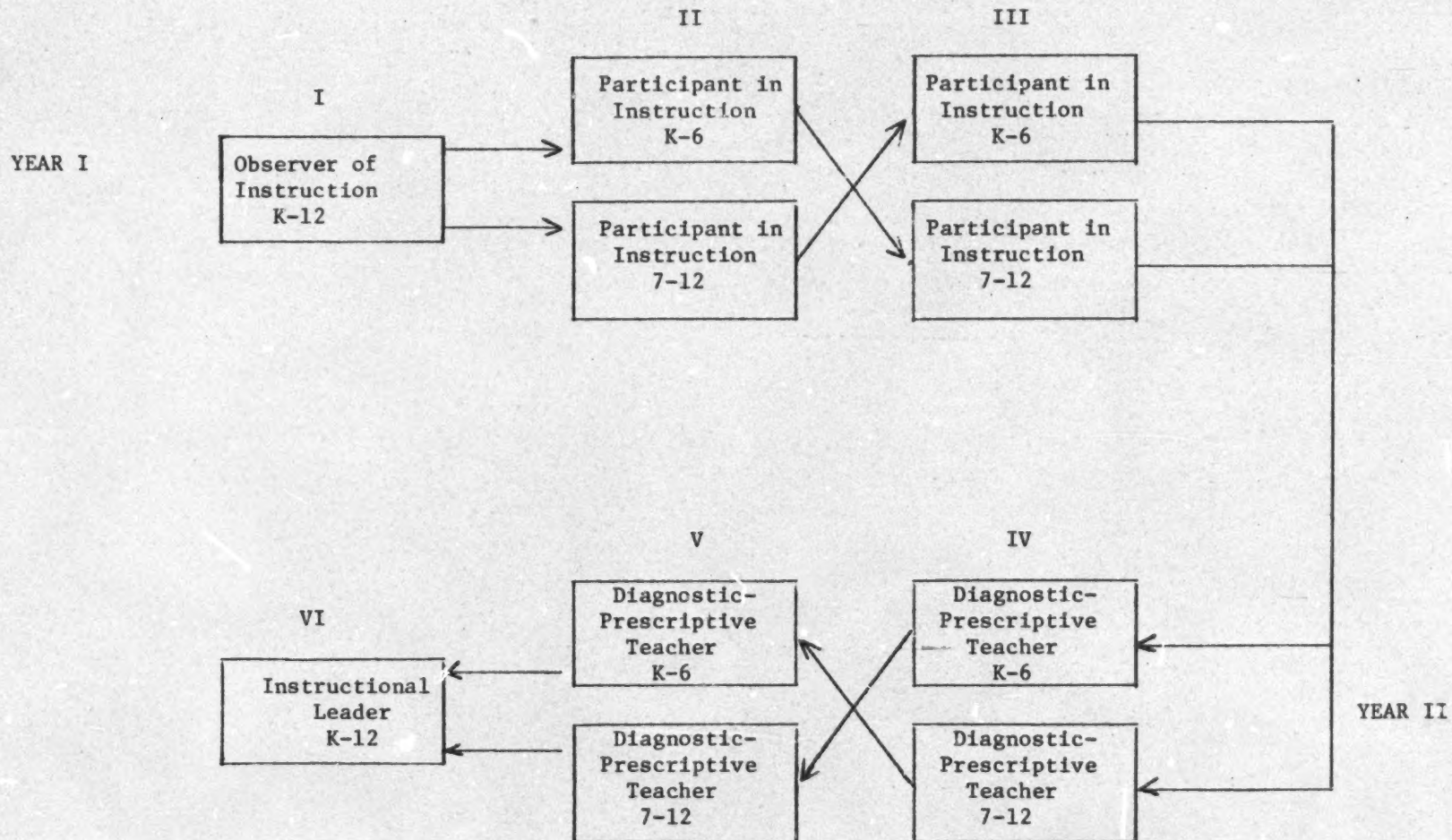
Conclusion

As stated previously, this model is not presented as a panacea, but rather as a basic structure which certain institutions (wishing to implement a field-based program in reading) can utilize in the creation of their own program. As with any graduate program in reading, it is designed to develop a classroom teacher with expertise in reading. However, it is the authors' belief that the model of the Ohio University Teacher Corps Project in Reading has the following advantages over non-field-based programs: (1) the activities involved in this particular experiential program are sequenced so as to provide the graduate student with the prerequisite skills necessary for effective performance in the classroom; (2) as a member of an instructional team, the graduate student has been provided with the supervision necessary for an effective field-based program;

(3) as a team member, the student deals continually with, and gains expertise in, human relations; (4) the instructional situations provide the student with the opportunity to make instructional decisions crucial to reading acquisition and to experience the decision-making process; (5) the activities and experiences provided the student in reading are drawn from real-life, rather than contrived situations; (6) the variety of experiences provided the student gives him the expertise in reading necessary to effectively deal with students at all grade and achievement levels; and, (7) the structure and sequencing of this programmatic model is not assumptive; i.e., no assumptions are made that a graduate student has the skills or expertise necessary to be effective in an instructional situation.

While some may disagree professionally or philosophically with the various components of this experiential model, the authors of the article feel it presents an alternative for consideration by institutions with graduate programs in reading. Such an institution, charged with the responsibility of training reading personnel, would be abdicating its professional responsibility if it merely dismissed the model as impractical without carefully scrutinizing its merits.

FIGURE ONE
A PROPOSED MODEL OF EXPERIENTIAL
PHASES FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS IN READING



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